Baithaks and Charan Chokies of Shri Nathji

Shri Vallabh created a temple for ShriNathji on Mount Govardhan in the traditional Hindu style, including with a tall spire.

But these were turbulent times for Hindus, especially in North India where muslim armies regularly destroyed anything remotely resembling a Hindu place of worship. Driven by ideological dislike for idol worship, greed for looting temple wealth (land, money, jewellery) and zeal for converting Hindus, muslim kings, generals and armies were a constant threat to Hindu religious institutions. So it was particularly brave of Shri Vallabh to create a temple with a spire on top of a mountain ! His faith in Shri Nathji was so firm, he believed that no one could possibly harm the Lord and his temple.

However, not everyone had Shri Vallabh's strength of 'dhrad ashray'. Having founded the temple at Govardhan, Shri Vallabh carried on with his tour of India and later settled at Adel near Prayag. At times of trouble, the temple authorities moved Shri Nathji and the temple wealth to safe places, out of the way of marauding armies. These were short stays and they have been called baethak / baithak of Shri Nathji, places where Shri Nathji sat (bethai = to sit) for a while.

Baithakjies of Sri Govardhan Nathji :-
1. On Sri Syama dhak
2. On Sri Gulul kund.
3. In Tod's Ghana (dense forest).
4. In Rasoli

Charan Choki is a foot stool. Wherever Shri Nathji stayed for a significant length of time or celebrated a major festival, vaishnavs have created a haveli there and called it the 'Foot Stool' of God - 'place where God rested his feet'.

After emperor Jahangir, tolerance for Hindu institutions in Mughal reign diminished. Shah Jahan was influenced by his Persian wife and increasingly orthodox Muslim court. He demolished several Hindu temples across his empire, laying waste to several temple towns. His son Aurangzeb was even more zealous and destroyed Hindu temples with great vehemence. He demolished the Kevshav Deo temple at Mathura and Vishwanath temple at Varanasi and built mosques there instead.

Tilkayat Govindji was only a boy at the time. His regents and vaishnavs around him decided to shift Shri Nathji to a more secure place. They were seeking a place where the local authorities could assure them long term safety for Shri Nathji and his retinue of vaishnavs and temple servants. They even went to Agra, seat of Mughal power, so see if they could revive old contacts and secure concessions from the emperor and his court. When negotiations failed, they moved out towards the Hindu kingdoms in Rajasthan. Many kings were devotees of Shri Nathji, but most were insecure about their own gaddies and could not offer the sort of surety vaishnavs sought. They eventually coming to rest in Mewad, the most pro-Hindu kingdom amongst Rajput kings. Lord now 'rests his feet' in the charming town of Nathdwara, 49km from Udaipur in the Aravalli hills.

Charan Chokies of Shri Nathji :-

1. Jatipura, the original 'temple' of Shri Nathji. A new temple is built near the ruin of the original temple.
2. Mathura, in Sat Ghara where Shri Nathji celebrated holi.
3. Agra, in the garden of Suraj Bhanji in s.y. 1725. This was the 1st stop on a long journey to find a safe place away from Aurangzeb's rule.
4. Dandot Dhara, near Gwalior on the banks of the river Chambal.
5. Krishnapuri, on the banks of Asan river.
6. Kota, (Rajasthan), Krishna Vilas, Padma Sila.
7. Kisangadh, Rajasthan. Kadamb Khandi of "Pitambarji's Gal".
8. Champa Seni, in a Kadamb Khandi during s.y 1728
9. Udaipur, During the reign of Maharana Raj Singhji, Sri Nathji stayed in Udaipur for nine months. Nathdwara was attacked by armies of Indore and ShriNathji moved to Udaipur and later Ghasyad / Ghasiyar for safety.
10. Simhad, "Kharch Bhandar". ShriNathji's rath got stuck here and refused to move. Taking this as a divine sign, Tilkayat decided to stay here. Next day Vahuji (his wife) also delivered an heir. As ShriNathji resides in a palatial haveli here, name of the village changed to Nathdwara - 'Gateway to God'.
11. Ghasyad, on the main highway to Abu. From s.y. 1858-1864, ShriNathji and the entire haveli stayed in the mountains of Aravalli to escape the political and military mayhem caused by Maratha incursions into Rajasthan. The place wasn't particularly hospitable and many people died from ill health and poisonous insect bites. The Haveli here is an exact replica of the Haveli at Nathdwara as it would have been at the start of 19th Century.
12. Nathdwara, the present haveli was rebuilt in s.y.1864 after the armies of Indore had reduced it to a ruin. Currently the haveli is going through massive expansion. Praised by some, loathed by others, the expansion is going to change the look and feel of the town forever.

History of Shri Nathji
Haveli and general information

Baethaks - general information
List of Shri Vallabh's Baithaks
List of baithaks of Vallabhkul
Map of Baithaks around India
Map of Baithaks around Vraj
Map of Baithaks around Guajarat

Click here for useful info on MahaPrabhuji's 84 baithaks. - Some history and full postal address of the baithak are listed here.

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Return to the main courtyard of the Haveli

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